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ROMANS 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS[4]	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Please Your Fellow Men, Not Yourself	Bearing Others' Burdens	The Strong Should Bear the Weak	Please Others, Not Yourselves	Charity Toward the Scrupulous (14:22-15:6)
15:1-6	15:1-6	15:1-6	15:1-6	
The Gospel for Gentiles and Jews Alike	Glorify God Together		The Gospel to the Gentiles	
15:7-13 (9b) (10b) (11b) (12b)	15:7-13 (9b) (10b) (11b) (12b)	15:7-13 (9b) (10b) (11b) (12b)	15:7-12 (9b) (10b) (11b) (12b)	15:7-12
			15:13	15:13
Paul's Missionary Commission	From Jerusalem to Illyricum	Personal Notes	Paul's Reason for Writing So Boldly	Paul's Ministry
15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-21	15:14-16
(21b)	(21)	(21)	(21)	15:17-21
Paul's Plan to Visit Rome	Plan to Visit Rome		Paul's Plan to Visit Rome	Paul's Plans
15:22-29	15:22-33	15:22-29	15:22-29	15:22-26
				15:27-29
15:30-33		15:30-33	15:30-33	15:30-33

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to

following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 15:1-13

A. The discussion about Christian freedom and responsibility is continuing in Rom. 15:1-13 (or at least Rom. 15:6) from Romans 14. Remember, chapter divisions are not inspired.

B. The entire argument of Rom. 14:1-15:13 could be outlined as
1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. Rom. 14:1,3; 15:7)
2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. Rom. 14:3-12)
3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. Rom. 14:13-23)
4. follow Christ's example and lay down your rights for others' edification and good (cf. Rom. 15:1-13)

C. Romans 15:5-6 reflects the three-fold purpose of the entire context of Rom. 14:1-15:13
1. live in harmony with one another
2. live in accordance with Christ's example
3. with unified hearts and lips offer united praise to God

D. This same tension between personal freedom and corporate responsibility is dealt with in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Colossians 2:16-23.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 15:1-6

[1]Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not *just* please ourselves. [2]Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. [3]For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, " THE REPROACHES OF THOSE WHO REPROACHED YOU FELL ON ME." [4]For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. [5]Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, [6]so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:1

NASB "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weakness of those without strength"
NKJV "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak"
NRSV "We who are strong ought to put up with the failing of the weak"
TEV "We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens"
NJB "We who are strong have a duty to put up with the qualms of the weak"
REB "Those of us who are strong must accept as our burden

the tender scruples of the weak"

Peshitta "We then who are strong ought to bear the weakness of the weak"

These are two PRESENT INFINITIVES used in the sense of IMPERATIVES. The mentioning of "the strong" and "weak" shows that Romans 15 continues the discussion begun in Rom. 14:1. It seems to reflect the tension within the Roman Church, and all churches, on the way Christians live their lives in

1. biblically ambiguous areas
2. OT requirements
3. reactions to non-moral, cultural issues

A good book that has been very helpful to me in this area is Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*.

For modern English readers, to label the two perspectives "strong" and "weak" is to prejudice the groups. This was not Paul's intent. The strong group referred to those who had been freed from a rule or ritual-oriented religious life. Their relationship with God is not precariously dependent on performing certain tasks or avoiding certain religious taboos. The other group was also a fully Christian, and a fully accepted, and a fully committed group of believers. However, they viewed their faith through the religious ideas of their past experiences. The Jewish believers tended to hold on to the Old Covenant practices of Judaism. The converted pagans tended to retain some of their old religious (pagan) ideas and practices. But notice that Paul did not call this mindset among believers "sin." It is only when they violated their consciences that it became sin (cf. Rom. 14:23).

The term *adunatos*, "without strength" (cf. Acts 14:8) is connected to the term *astheneō* (cf. Rom. 14:1,21; 1 Cor. 8:7,10,11,12; 9:22), which also means "without strength."

This text implies that Christians should not grudgingly tolerate other Christians, but should lovingly "care for" and "work with" them.

The term, "bear" was also used of Jesus' "cross bearing" in John 19:17 and Luke 14:27. Paul knew the tensions that can occur between religious people. He was trained under Gamaliel, who was a rabbi of the liberal rabbinical school of Hillel. Remember, Paul wrote Romans from Corinth!

▣ **"and not *just* please ourselves"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process. Self-centeredness is a sure sign of immaturity; following Christ's example (cf. Rom. 15:3; Phil. 2:1-11) is the sign of maturity. Again, it is "the strong" who were being addressed (cf. Rom. 14:1,14,16,21,27). This is not to imply they had all the responsibility in maintaining the fellowship. "The weak" are also addressed in Rom. 14:3, 20, 23; 15:5-6,7.

15:2 "Each of us is to please his neighbor" This is "neighbor" used in the sense of fellow Christian. This does not imply personal compromise of convictions, but that one does not push his personal preferences or opinions in the ambiguous areas. The unity and growth of the body of Christ, not personal freedom, is paramount (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23; 10:24-33; Eph. 4:1-16)!!!

▣

NASB "for his edification"
NKJV "leading to edification"
NRSV "for the good purpose of building up the neighbor"
TEV "in order to build them up in the faith"
NJB "help them to become stronger Christians"
REB "and will build up the common life"
Peshitta "in good and constructive ways"

This is the major theme of Romans 14 (cf. Rom. 14:16,19). It is also one of the tests for spiritual gifts found in 1 Cor. 10:23; 12:7; 14:26; Eph. 4:29.

In this context it refers to "the strong" believer limiting his/her freedom in love for the purpose of helping fellow Christians grow in faith. Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Raymond E. Brown, ed., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, has an interesting comment on this verse.

> "This phrase is often taken to mean 'to edify him' (the neighbor), referring to the personal development of one's Christian neighbor. But considering that Paul often uses the building metaphor in his letters in a corporate sense, the phrase undoubtedly has a social, corporate meaning, here as well (cf. 1 Cor. 14:12; Eph. 4:12; Rom. 14:19)" (p. 328).

It must be restated that this context is not implying that "weak" brothers should become "strong" brothers.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

15:3 "For even Christ" Christ is our pattern and example. This truth is also stressed in Rom. 15:5; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 3:16.

Jesus was incarnate to accomplish three spiritual tasks.

1. to give His life as a substitute for human sin
2. to fully, completely, and ultimately reveal the character and purpose of YHWH
3. to give redeemed humans an example to follow

▣ **"it is written"** This is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, which is a Hebrew idiom for Scripture. This is a quote from Psalm 69:9. By referring to Christ's example (did not please Himself, cf. Phil. 2:5-8) in addition to an OT quote, Paul uses the two most important sources of authority in the early church (cf. Newman and Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, p. 271). The selflessness of Christ as He bore the sin of all the world is our example (cf. 1 John 3:16).

Paul seems to link

1. Jesus' bearing reproach as the Messiah
2. Paul bearing the reproach of the gospel

There is a price to pay for serving God in a fallen world.

1. the rejected and crucified Jesus
2. Paul tells of his rejection and persecution in 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-33. Paul was finally beheaded in Rome

15:4 "for whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction" The OT was

1. written for the education and guidance of NT believers also (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11).
2. It is relevant to new covenant believers (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17).
3. There is a continuity, but also a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

▣ **"so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures"** Notice how the truth of God's Word and believers' lifestyle response to it are combined. Faith and practice are bound together (cf. Rom. 15:5). They result in confidence in life, in death, and at the promised hope of Christ's return.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSEVERANCE

▣ **"we might have hope"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, which implies our hope is dependant on the actions mentioned earlier in Rom. 15:4. In the NT "hope" often referred to some eschatological event when our salvation will be consummated (cf. Rom. 8:30; 1 John 3:2). This Greek term does not have the connotation of uncertainty as the English term. The Second Coming is a certain event with an uncertain time element.

Paul uses this term often in several different but related senses. Often it is associated with the consummation of the believer's faith. This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain but the time element is future and unknown. It is often associated with "faith" and "love" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 2:16). A partial list of some of Paul's uses are:

1. The Second Coming, Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13
2. Jesus is our hope, 1 Tim. 1:1
3. Trust in the gospel, Col. 1:23
4. Ultimate salvation, Col. 1:5; 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:8
5. The glory of God, Rom. 5:2, 2 Cor. 3:12; Col. 1:27
6. Assurance of salvation, 1 Thess. 5:8
7. Eternal life, Titus 1:2; 3:7
8. Redemption of all creation, Rom. 8:20
9. Faith, Rom. 8:23-25, 15:4
10. Title of God, Rom. 15:13
11. Paul's desire for believers, 2 Cor. 1:7

15:5 "may the God. . .grant" This is a rare AORIST ACTIVE OPTATIVE, which expresses a wish or prayer. Paul's prayer, Rom. 15:5-6, had two petitions.

1. to be in one mind (cf. Rom. 12:16; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:2)
2. to be in one voice of praise to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 15:6, 7,9)

▣ **"the God who gives perseverance and encouragement"** This is almost a descriptive title of God (cf. Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 1:3). These characteristics of God come to believers through the Scriptures (cf. Rom. 15:4).

These descriptive titles for God are so meaningful that I wanted to give you some other examples that come to my mind.

1. "to Him who is able" – Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20; Jude v. 24
2. "the God of hope" – Rom. 1:13
3. "God of peace" – Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20
4. "the only wise God" – Rom. 16:27
5. "the Father of mercies" – 2 Cor. 1:3
6. "God of all comfort" – 2 Cor. 1:3
7. "God of love and peace" – 2 Cor. 13:11
8. "the Father of glory" – Eph. 1:17
9. "the Majesty on high" – Heb. 1:5; also note 2 Pet. 1:17
10. "the Father of Lightds" – James 1:17

Wow, what a God we trust and serve!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

15:6 "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" This is Deity's full NT title (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3; notice a similar title in Rom. 1:7). This is not the God of philosophical necessity, but of revelation. Notice the two titles of God in Paul's prayer of Rom. 15:5-6.

1. the God of perseverance and encouragement
2. the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRIST JESUS AS LORD

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 15:7-13

[7]Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. [8]For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, [9]and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written,

"Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles,
And I will sing to Your name."
10Again he says,
"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."
11And again,
"Praise the Lord all you Gentiles,
And let all the peoples praise Him."
12Again Isaiah says,
"There shall come the root of Jesse,
And He who arises to rule over the Gentiles,
In Him shall the Gentiles hope."
13Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

15:7

NASB, TEV, REB	**"accept one another"**
NKJV	**"receive one another"**
NRSV	**"wwelcome one another"**
NJB	**"treat each other in the same friendly way"**
Peshitta	**"be friendly"**

This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. Believers must continue to accept one another because Christ accepted them! This same truth is found in Rom. 14:1. However, here it introduces a series of OT passages about God accepting Gentiles (cf. Rom. 15:9-12). This may have reflected the tension within the Roman Church.

It is surprising that in an extended context on the "weak" and "strong" Christian brothers, that Paul shifts the subject to YHWH's acceptance of Gentiles. I guess that YHWH's acceptance of Gentiles is an illustration of how Christians ought to accept other Christians who are different. This is another possible reference to the conflict in the Roman church between believing Jews who started the church and the growing number of believing Gentile leadershp and influence!

Christianity is characterized by a self-giving of believers to one another (cf. Rom. 1:12; 12:5,10,16; 13:8; 14:13,19; 15:5,7,14; 16:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

▣ **"just as Christ also accepted us"** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Here is the motive and impetus of the believer's actions toward others (cf. Rom. 14:3; 1 John 3:16). In Romans 14 the focus was on

1. Christ as Master and Judge, Rom. 15:1-12
2. Christ as our example of self-giving love, Rom. 15:13-23

Christ accepted us, we must accept others!

▣ **"to the glory of God"** This is a hard word to define. See full note at Rom. 3:23.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (NT)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY (OT)

15:8 "Christ has become a servant to the circumcision" Jesus is God's fulfillment of OT prophecy (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24). This may be directed to the tension in the Roman church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles.

▣

NASB	**"on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers"**
NRSV	**"on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs"**
TEV	**"on behalf of the Jews, to show that God is faithful, to make his promises to their ancestors come true"**
NJB	**"so that God could faithfully carry out the promises made to the patriarchs"**

This probably relates to God's OT covenant promises to Israel (cf. Rom. 4:16). However, it could refer to God's promises to redeem all mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15, 12:3, Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:2-4; 56:7; 66:18-24; see full list of texts in SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN). The mystery of the gospel is that God's plan has always been the unifying of Jew and Gentile through Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

The NT message is the fulfillment of OT hopes, not something totally new. Christ's great mission was

1. to fulfill to Israel her promised hope
2. to open the door to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:29-30; 9:30; 10:11-12,16-20; 11:25,32; 16:25; Eph. 2:11-3:21)

As Israel had failed in her evangelistic mission to reveal God and to attract the Gentiles to faith, Jesus empowers a new spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 11:26; Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6) to accomplish this universal task (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; John 3:16; Acts 1:8).

▣ **"the truth of God"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

▣ **"confirm"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: GUARANTEE

15:9-12 This is a series of OT quotes to show that the Gentiles (i.e., "nations" in Hebrew) have always been a part of God's plan (cf. Rom. 1:5; 10:16-20). This is a series of OT quotes from

1. Rom. 15:9 – Ps. 18:49 or 2 Sam. 22:50
2. Rom. 15:10 – Deut. 32:43
3. Rom. 15:11 – Ps. 117:1
4. Rom. 15:12 – Isa. 11:1,10

Notice there is a quote from each section of the Hebrew canon: Law, Prophets, and Writings. For an even fuller list of OT texts that show YHWH's concern for Gentiles, see the Special Topic below, expecially #5.

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

15:9 "to glorify God for His mercy" God's mercy is the theological key to Roman's predestination (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18,23) and Gentile inclusion (cf. Rom. 11:30,31,32; 15:9). It is God's mercy that saved Israel. It is God's mercy that saves believing Gentiles. The mechanism is not human performance (cf. Romans 9), but the gracious, unchanging character of God (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8,4; Joel 2:13; see SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD [OT]) and the promise of Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:1,10).

It is interesting that the Gentiles "glorify" God by

1. confession/praise (see SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION/PROFESSION)
2. singing

When a believer sings to God, he is confessing/professing! Hymns, like creeds, are a valid way of confessing (cf. Rom. 10:9-13).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "RECEIVE," "BELIEVE," "CONFESS/PROFESS," AND "CALL UPON"?

15:13 "May the God of hope" This was a closing doxology to the literary unit begun in Rom. 14:1. This was another wonderful title for Deity—the God of hope. See a partial listing of the titles for God at v. 5.

▣ **"fill you with all joy and peace"** This is an AORIST ACTIVE OPTATIVE, denoting Paul's prayer for the believers at Rome. Notice the presence of "all" (cf. Rom. 5:1-2; 14:17).

"Joy" and "peace" come only with faith in the gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (NT)

▣

NASB, NKJV, NRSV	**"in believing"**
TEV	**"by means of your faith in Him"**
NJB	**"in your faith"**
REB	**"as you lead the life of faith"**
Peshitta	**"by faith "**

This is a PRESENT ACVTIVE INFINITIVE. This expresses the confidence of perseverance by means of continuing faith in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resting in personal joy and peace (cf. Rom. 5:1-5). Faith in Christ is not only an initial response but lifestyle response.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FAITH, BELIEVE, OR TRUST

▣ **"so that you will abound in hope"** This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE of *perisseuō*, which basically means "over and above."

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOUND (*perisseuō*)

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE

▣ **"by the power of the Holy Spirit"** The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity who accomplishes God's will and plan in this New Age. Nothing of lasting value or effect occurs without Him (cf. Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Thess. 1:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE NT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central truth of Romans 14:1-15:13?

2. Why does Paul quote the OT passages in verses 9-12? What great truth do they teach?

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 15:14-33

A. In many ways the close of this letter is similar to its opening, Rom. 1:8-15
   1. it extols their faith (cf. Rom. 1:8)
   2. it defends Paul's apostleship of the gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 1:13,14)
   3. it asserts Paul's desire to visit them (cf. Rom. 1:10,13)
   4. it expresses Paul's desire that they would help him on his way to other regions not yet evangelized (i.e., Spain, cf. Rom. 1:13)

B. Again, there is a hint of the tension in the Roman Church between believing Jews and believing Gentiles which has been alluded to or hinted at throughout the letter, but especially Romans 9-11; 14:1-15:13. Remember, the NT letters are like listening to one half of a phone conversation. The other side must be understood from
   1. the intention of the original author
   2. the historical setting of those who received the letters

C. Also there is a hint of the tension in the early church concerning Paul's apostolic standing. He seems to defend himself in Rom. 15:15-19; 1:2,5.

D. This literary unit contains two topics.
   1. Paul's apostolic, evangelistic, Gentile-oriented ministry (cf. Rom. 15:14-21)
   2. Paul's travel plans to accomplish this purpose may take him through Rome (cf. Rom. 15:22-33)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 15:14-21

[14]And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. [15]But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, [16]to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest of the gospel of God, so that *my* offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. [17]Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God. [18]For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, [19]in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. [20]And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; [21]but as it is written,

"THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE,
AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

15:14

NASB "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced"

NKJV "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren"

NRSV "I myself feel confident about you, my brothers and sisters"
TEV "My friends: I myself feel sure that you"
NJB "It is not because I have any doubts about you, my brothers, on the contrary I am quite certain that you"
REB "I have no doubt in my own mind"
Peshitta "I myself am persuaded concerning you"

The "I" (*auto egō*) is very emphatic in Greek. Paul is truly complimenting this church ("convinced," PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE).

Paul asserts three things about these Roman Christians in Rom. 15:14.

1. they are full of goodness (PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)
2. they are full of knowledge (PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE)
3. they are able to admonish one another (PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE)

This verse implies that Paul is not bringing a new message to them, but explaining and clarifying the good news which they already had heard and accepted (cf. Rom. 15:15). No one knows who started the church in Rome. It was not Peter. Most commentators suppose it was those Jews visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost who heard Peter preach and trusted Christ. As they went home to their synagogue, they brought the gospel with them.

▣ **"you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all"** As the "I myself" is emphatic in the first phrase, "you yourselves" is emphatic here. The term "full" (*mestos*) means "full of" or "replete." Paul used this term only twice, both times in Romans (Rom. 1:29; 15:14).

The term "filled" (*plēroō*) is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Paul used this term often in Romans (cf. Rom. 1:29; 8:4; 13:8; 15:13,14,19). He also uses the NOUN *plērōma* often in Romans (cf. Rom. 11:12,25; 13:10; 15:29), but never the ADJECTIVE in any of his writings.

It was Paul's desire that a full gospel completely fill believers to overflow in love and service. Believers have all they need in Christ. They need to fully accept and receive this assurance.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FILLED

▣ **"full of goodness, filled with all knowledge"** These terms relate contextually to the immediately preceding literary unit of Rom. 14:1-15:13—the believer's love for each other amidst the differences between Christians in the ambiguous biblical areas. This may be confirmed

1. by the general use of the term "good" in Rom. 14:16; 15:2 and here
2. that it relates to the whole gospel of faith and practice; orthodoxy, and orthopraxy

▣ **"able to admonish one another"** The church is designed by God to encourage and admonish one another (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:15). We are saved to serve, to serve God by serving one another! Mature believers are to live for the health and growth of the Body! Western Christianity has obscured this NT truth. Christianity is corporate!

SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL FAITH IS CORPORATE

15:15 "I have written very boldly to you" Paul wrote his letter to the Roman church from Corinth. He was attacked by one of the factions in the Corinthian church for being bold in his letters, but weak in person. This VERB form of the word "boldly" is found in 2 Cor. 10:2,12; 11:21. Paul's boldness came from his conversion, call, and knowledge of the gospel.

▣ **"because of the grace that was given me from God"** Paul refers to the grace of God (cf. Rom. 1:5; 12:3; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; Gal. 2:9; and Eph. 3:7-8) which called him, saved him, gifted him, and sent him to the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:13; 15:16). It is a way of asserting his apostleship and authority (cf. Rom. 1:1,5).

15:16 "minister. . .ministering. . .offering. . .acceptable" Verses 16 and 17 contain several priestly terms and phrases. "Minister" is used of priestly service in Rom. 15:27. It is used of Christ's service in Heb. 8:2. Paul saw himself as a priest (cf. Phil. 2:17) offering the Gentiles to God, which was Israel's task (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 66:20). The church has been given the evangelistic assignment once given to Israel (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The church is called by OT priesthood terms in Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9 and Rev. 1:6.

▣ **"the gospel of God** It is not only the gospel of Jesus (cf. Mark 1:1; Rom. 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12,18; 2 Cor. 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Gal. 1:7, etc.), but also can rightfully be called "the gospel of God" (cf. Mark 1:14; Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2,8,9; 1 Pet. 4:17). It is the culmination of the universal salvation of God promised from Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6 and prophesied so often in Isaiah (i.e., Isa. 2:2-4; 51:4,5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL

▣ **"sanctified by the Holy Spirit"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE meaning, "have been and continue to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit." This may again reflect the tension between Jewish and Gentile believers in the Roman church. Paul stated clearly that the nations (Gentiles) had been and continue to be fully accepted and consecrated by the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

15:17-19 Notice the unified action of the Triune God:

1. to God (cf. v.17)
2. in Christ (cf. Rom. 15:17)
3. in the power of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 15:19)
4. notice also the three Persons of the Godhead in Rom. 15:30

Although the term "Trinity" is not biblical, the concept is (cf. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; Acts 2:33-34; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21; 13:14; Eph. 1:3-14; 4:4-6; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

15:18-19 Paul listed the different ways his Gentile ministry had been effective.

1. by word
2. by deed
3. in signs
4. in wonders
5. all through the power of the Spirit

Just a note about a manuscript variation related to #5.

1. "the Spirit" (i.e., MS B)
2. some Greek texts add "the Holy Spirit" (i.e., MSS A, D^{*})
3. some have "the Spirit of God" (i.e., MSS P^{46}, א, D^{1})

As with so many of these variations, this addition, or uninspired clarification, does not affect the truth of the passage. It was usually an attempt to standardize the phrasing of the NT by later Christian scribes who copied the text. UBS^{4} gives "Spirit of God" a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

15:18 "resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles" God's goal has always been a people who reflect His character. The gospel of Jesus restores the image of God lost in the Fall of Genesis 3. Intimate fellowship with God is evidenced by godly character. The goal of Christianity is fellowship with God and Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph.

4:1,13; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:15), which hopefully will draw unbelievers to faith in God and His Christ.

▣ **"by word and deed"** This referred to Paul's ministry, not the obedience of the Roman Christians. It is obviously linked to the power of the Spirit in Rom. 15:19.

15:19 "in the power of signs and wonders" These two terms appear together many times in Acts (cf. Acts 14:8-10; 16:16-18, 25-26; 20:9-12; 28:8-9), describing God's power working through the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). They appear to be synonymous. Exactly to what this referred—miracles or conversion—is uncertain. Here again, this may be a hint at the tension over Paul's apostleship. As God confirmed the work of the Twelve in Jerusalem, He also confirmed the work of Paul among the Gentiles by means of observable signs.

▣ **"I have fully preached the gospel of Christ"** This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INFINITIVE of *plēroō* (cf. Rom. 15:14). This implies that Paul believed he had finished his preaching task in the eastern Mediterranean (cf. Rom. 15:23).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE GOSPEL

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE *KERYGMA* OF THE EARLY CHURCH

▣ **"as far as Illyricum"** This Roman province, also known as Dalmatia, was located on the eastern side of the Adriatic Sea north west of the Grecian peninsula (Macedonia). Acts never records Paul as preaching there but it does put him in the area (cf. Acts 20:1-2).

The phrase "as far as" could mean "on the border of" or "in the region of."

15:20 "And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was *already* named" This was Paul's consistent missionary strategy (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10; 2 Cor. 10:15-16). He wanted to reach the pagans who had never had the chance to hear and receive the gospel. He usually picked large, strategically located cities of the Roman Empire so that the established church could evangelize and disciple their surrounding areas.

15:21 This is a quote from the Septuagint (LXX) of Isa. 52:15 which speaks of the Gentiles hearing about God. Paul chose this prophecy as his missionary strategy.

Paul used whichever translation of the many available in the first century that fit his argument. See full note at Rom. 9:33.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 15:22-29

[22]For this reason I have often been prevented from coming to you; [23]but now, with no further place for me in these regions, and since I have had for many years a longing to come to you [24]whenever I go to Spain- for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you, when I have first enjoyed your company for a while-[25]but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. [26]For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. [27]Yes, they were pleased *to do so*, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. [28]Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain. [29]I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

15:22 "For this reason" This reason is explained in Rom. 15:20.

▣ **"I have often been prevented"** This is an IMPERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. He was prevented again and again (cf. Rom. 1:13). The agency (i.e., PASSIVE VOICE was not stated. It could have been God, Satan, evil people, or other gospel opportunities.

Remember Paul wrote Romans while he was in Corinth. In Corinth Paul's opponents attacked him because he had not been able to fulfill his travel plans. Paul was surely affected by the attacks from within the Corinthian church. He may have mentioned that his travel plan had been thwarted again and again.

15:23 "but now, with no further place for me in these regions" This verse must be taken in the limited geographical sense of Asia Minor or the Eastern Mediterranean area. Paul had not preached to everyone, everywhere in these areas, but only to some. Hyperboles always bother western thinkers!

▣ **"and since I have had for many years a longing to come to see you"** Paul had often expressed his desire to visit Rome (cf. Rom. 1:10-15; Acts 19:21; 23:11).

There is a Greek manuscript variant at this point that is not listed in the UBS^4 critical footnotes. The ancient Greek manuscripts MSS P^{46}, א, A, D, F, G and L have "many" (*polus*) which is used in Rom. 15:22, but MSS B, C and P have "several" (*ikanos*). Possibly later scribes were bothered by Paul's overstatement.

15:24 "whenever I go to Spain" Paul wanted to go to the western region of the Roman Empire (cf. 2 Cor. 10:16). I think Paul was released from Roman imprisonment after the close of Acts and went on a fourth missionary journey. The Pastorals (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) were written on this fourth journey. There is possibly a reference to this in 2 Tim. 4:10 where some Greek uncial manuscripts, א, C and the Latin Vulgate and Coptic translations, have "Gaul." Clement of Rome (see Ad. Cor. 5:7), who wrote before the end of the first century, in his "Letter to the Corinthians," 5:7, also asserts that Paul traveled to the "bounds of the West."

▣ **"and to be helped on my way there by you,"** This phrase became a technical idiom in the church for helping itinerant missionaries to their next preaching destination (cf. Acts 15:3; 1 Cor. 16:6, 11; 2 Cor. 1:16; Titus 3:13; 3 John 6). Rome was not able to contribute to the relief fund for the church in Jerusalem, but they could be a financial help for Paul's missionary travels to the west.

15:25 "serving the saints" This VERB is often used in connection with raising money (cf. Rom. 15:31; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

15:26 "a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem" Paul had been receiving this collection for several years from (1) Galatia and Asia Minor (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4), and (2) Macedonia and Achaia (cf. 2 Corinthians 8-9). He got the idea from the church at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:30; 12:25). It was meant to help unify the two wings of the early church-Jew and Gentile. The Gentile churches are described as "delighted" to do it (cf. Rom. 15:26 and 27).

SPECIAL TOPIC: *KOINŎNIA*

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

SPECIAL TOPIC: HUNGER

15:27 "if" This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his literary purpose. If the Gentiles share in the spiritual blessings of the

Jews (cf. Romans 10-11; 1 Cor. 9:11) they should help in the physical need of the mother church in Jerusalem.

▣ **"spiritual things"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE NT

15:28

NASB "when I have furnished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs"
NKJV "when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit"
NRSV "when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected"
TEV "when I have finished this task and have turned over to them all the money that has been raised for them"
NJB "So when I have done this and officially handed over what has been raised"
Peshitta "When, therefore, I have accomplished this and have finished" distributing to them this kind of help"

This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE and an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. This literally alludes to the common way of sealing a package to assure the safety of its contents. This may be a way for Paul to assert that all the money given would be sent and received. To assure this he also took with him several representatives from the contributing churches (cf. Acts 20:4).

For "seal" see SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL

15:29 Notice the word *plēroō* / *plērōma* is used again. See note at Rom. 15:14.

▣ **"of the blessing of Christ"** This phrase refers to the blessing that the preaching/teaching of the gospel brings. It does not refer to a prayer in this context.

Some ancient Greek texts tried to clarify this understanding by adding a phrase, "the blessing of the gospel of Christ" (MS A^2, NKJV). The shorter text is found in MSS ℵ*, A, B, C, D, F, G, P. The UBS^4 gives the shorter reading an "A" rating (certain).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: ROMANS 15:30-33

30Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, 31that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and *that* my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; 32so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company. 33Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

15:30 "I urge you. . .to strive together with me" These are strong Greek terms. Notice the two "by's." The power to do this was from The Son and The Spirit. The first is also used in Rom. 12:1. The second is used of Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane. Paul sensed a deep need for prayer for himself and his gospel ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 6:18-20; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1). His experience in Jerusalem proved to be difficult (cf. Rom. 15:31). He arrived in Rome, but not in the way he had envisioned (i.e., in chains).

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

15:30-33 Paul's prayer expresses three desires.

1. that he might be delivered from his enemies in Judah (cf. Acts 20:22-23)

2. that the gift from the Gentile churches would be received well by the church in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:1ff; 21:17ff)
3. that he might then come visit Rome, hopefully on his way to Spain

15:30 "to strive together with me" This term is used only here in the NT. It is a compound of *sun* (together with) and *agōnizomai* (to contend, to fight, to strive earnestly, cf. 1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 6:12). This strong INFINITIVE calls on the Roman church to aggressively agonize with Paul in prayer about the reception of the Gentile churches' offerings by the mother church in Jerusalem.

15:31 "who are disobedient" This refers to the Jewish opposition or possibly the Judaizers, but not the church in general (cf. Rom. 11:30,31).

SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDAIZERS

15:32 Paul's prayer ends with two more requests: (1) he might come to them in joy and (2) he might have a time of rest with them (AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] SUBJUNCTIVE of *sunanapauomai*, only here in the NT, but used in Isa. 11:6. Paul quoted Isa. 11:1,10 in Rom. 15:12). Paul needs a time of quiet rest and recuperation among mature believers (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-33)! He did not get it, however. Arrest, trials, and years in prison awaited him in Palestine.

This verse has many manuscript variants. For more information, see Bruce M. Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT*.

15:33 "the God of peace" This is a wonderful title for God (cf. Rom. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16; Heb. 13:20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (NT)

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (OT)

▣ **"Amen"** See SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is the OT a benefit to NT believers (Rom. 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:6,11)?
2. Why does Paul quote the OT in Rom. 15:9-12? What great truth do they teach?
3. Where in this section of Romans does the tension between Jew and Gentile possibly appear?
4. Where in this section of Romans does the tension about Paul's apostleship appear?
5. What was Paul's reason for the offering of the Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:15-28)?
6. What was Paul's missionary strategy? Why did he want to go to Spain?
7. How and why does Paul describe his work as that of a priest (v.16) relating to Israel as a Kingdom of Priests (Exod. 19:5-6) or to the church (I. Pet. 2: 5,9; Rev. 1:6)?
8. Did God answer Paul's prayer of verses 30-33?

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